

NAVAL HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER

EVALUATING HEALTH EFFECTS OF MILITARY SERVICE: THE MILLENNIUM COHORT STUDY

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Evaluating Health Effects of Military Service:
The Millennium Cohort Study

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The Millennium Cohort Study is a project recommended by Congress and sponsored by the Department of Defense. The study will survey and follow nearly 140,000 people during and after their military service, for up to 21 years. That makes it the largest study of its kind in military history. The goal of the Millennium Cohort Study is to evaluate the long-term health effects of military service.

Lessons From the Past

Soon after Operation Desert Storm ended in 1991, some Gulf War veterans reported unexplained medical symptoms. Many of these veterans attributed their illnesses to deployment-related exposures. At that time, the Department of Defense (DoD) had little systematically collected predeployment health data to compare with postdeployment health assessments, making it difficult to sort out the effects of deployment. It is estimated that more than \$3 billion has been spent on research and programs to understand what some people have called “Gulf War illnesses.”

After 1991, the DoD and the Institute of Medicine outlined the need for systematically collected, population-based data to evaluate the health of service members throughout their military careers and after leaving the service. The Millennium Cohort Study responds to this need by evaluating longitudinal data on a large cohort of military personnel over a 21-year period. These essential data will help researchers and military leaders determine the health impact of military deployments more completely than in the past. In turn, this better understanding may change deployment policies as well as prevention and treatment programs.

Looking to the Future

The Millennium Cohort Study has the potential to contribute new and important information to the field of preventive medicine and public health, benefiting both military and civilian populations. Previous cohort studies, including the Framingham Heart Study and the Nurses' Cohort Study, have expanded our understanding of causes of heart disease and cancer. The Millennium Cohort Study has the potential to uncover unanticipated exposure-disease associations in a relatively young, healthy population.

The Millennium Cohort Study will serve as a foundation for other epidemiological studies. While military research teams will manage many of these efforts, civilian research teams are expected to contribute as well. The study's successful implementation is critical, and its results may resonate in public health for years to come.

For more information, visit www.millenniumcohort.org



REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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